

SOAS Undergraduate Degree Classification Scheme Explained

The process for calculating degree classifications at SOAS is somewhat complex. This document is only intended as additional explanation to assist you in understanding the process. The Degree Classification Regulations are contained in the Taught Degree Regulations, Appendix A and will always be the only document referenced by the School for all classification decisions.

Degree classifications are calculated using the marks for the modules studied over your last two years of studies at SOAS. The marks for modules taken during your first year of study are not considered for the purposes of classifying a degree. If you take a language year abroad in your second or third year, this year of study is not at SOAS and is on a pass/fail basis, and so this year is also disregarded for the purposes of degree classification.

Degree classification is a two stage process using what are termed the 'Primary Rule' and the 'Secondary Rule'. These are explained in detail below.

To help illustrate the classification process, we will use the following transcripts for two imaginary student on the BA Middle Eastern Studies.

Student Q			
Module		Unit Value	Overall Mark
Year 1	Literature of the Near & Middle East	1	50
	Arabic 100	1	48
	Introduction to Arabic Culture	1	52
	Introduction to the history of the Near & Middle East	1	49
Year 2	Nation and Nationalism in Middle Eastern fiction	1	62
	The Muslim World: Unity in Diversity	1	55
	Arabic 200	1	60
	Ottoman Art & Architecture	0.5	61
	Themes in the Art & Archaeology of the Near & Middle East	0.5	58
Year 3	Qur'anic Arabic	1	47
	Cinema of the Middle East & North Africa 1	0.5	60
	Cinema of the Middle East & North Africa 2	0.5	66
	Independent Study Project in Middle Eastern Studies	1	70
	Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility	1	62

Student X			
Module		Unit Value	Overall Mark
Year 1	Literature of the Near & Middle East	1	52
	Arabic 100	1	47
	Introduction to Arabic Culture	1	56
	Introduction to the history of the Near & Middle East	1	50

Year 2	Nation and Nationalism in Middle Eastern fiction	1	64
	The Muslim World: Unity in Diversity	1	49
	Arabic 200	1	48
	Ottoman Art & Architecture	0.5	50
	Themes in the Art & Archaeology of the Near & Middle East	0.5	62
Year 3	Qur'anic Arabic	1	51
	Cinema of the Middle East & North Africa 1	0.5	56
	Cinema of the Middle East & North Africa 2	0.5	63
	Independent Study Project in Middle Eastern Studies	1	60
	Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility	1	70

In both examples, the modules in Year 1 are in grey, as these marks are not included for the purposes of degree classification.

Primary Rule

The first stage in determining degree classification is the application of the Primary Rule. This rule looks at the pattern of your module marks across your last two years of study at SOAS and how these compare to the classifications.

For Student Q the module marks against Classifications break down as follows

Mark range	Classification	Student achieved in Year 2 (pre-final year)	Student achieved in Year 3	Total modules in class
70-100	First Class (1)	0	1	1
60 to 69	Upper Second Class (2i)	2.5	2	4.5
50-59	Lower Second Class (2ii)	1.5	0	1.5
40-49	Third Class	0	1	1
0-39	Fail – No award	0	0	0

For Student X the marks against classification break down as follows

Mark range	Classification	Student achieved in Year 2 (pre-final year)	Student achieved in Year 3	Total modules in class
70-100	First Class (1)	0	1	1
60 to 69	Upper Second Class (2i)	1.5	1.5	3
50-59	Lower Second Class (2ii)	0.5	1.5	2
40-49	Third Class	2	0	2
0-39	Fail – No award	0	0	0

To be awarded a particular degree classification, a student must have achieved a minimum number of modules at that classification level or better as set out in Table A below. In applying the Primary Rule, the overall module marks are considered working from the highest classification down.

Table A – Primary Rule pattern of modules achieve in class

Second (Pre-final) year at class or above	Final year at class or above	Total modules in class or above
0	4	4
0.5	3.5	4
1	3	4
1.5	2.5	4
2	2	4
2.5	2	4.5
3	1.5	4.5
3.5	1.5	5
4	1	5

For our two example students:

Under the primary rule, Student Q's profile does not have sufficient module marks at First Class level to meet the pattern for that class of award. However, Student Q meets the initial test for an Upper Second Class 2(i) classification because the student achieved 2 modules at (2i) classification in their final year and 2.5 modules at (2i) classification in their second year. In total they have achieved 4.5 modules at Upper Second Class.

Under the primary rule, Student X's marks do not immediately fit into any of the profiles as they have not achieved 4 or more modules in any one single classification. This means that marks awarded at or above a classification need to be considered together. Student X in total has achieved 1 module at First class + 3 modules at Upper Second Class. Therefore taking both these classifications together Student X could also be considered for an Upper Class 2(i) under the Primary Rule because they have achieved 4 modules at or above this classification in the allowable pattern of 1.5 in second year and 2.5 in the final year as set out in Table A above.

Once the Primary Rule has been used to give an initial indication of what classification a student may be considered for, the Secondary Rule is applied.

Secondary Rule

Under the Secondary rule, to be awarded a classification of a particular class, the student must not have more than a certain maximum number of modules which are two classes below the classification under consideration. There is therefore a second test, to see if the student meets the requirements for a particular classification.

In summary, the regulations say:

To be awarded a degree of a particular classification, a candidate must not have more than 1.5 modules (45 credits) of two classifications below.

If a student has 2 module marks or more (60 or more credits) two classifications below the one under consideration, the second and subsequent modules in the lower class may be compensated by modules with a mark one classification higher than the classification under consideration

If there are not sufficient higher modules to compensate for the lower modules, then the modules in the class level under consideration are deemed to be reduced by one class on a one for one basis

according to the number of modules beyond the allowable 1.5 modules (45 credits) of two classes below.

Once the above adjustments are made under the adjusted profile is re-examined under the primary rule.

For our two example students:

Student Q has only 1 module at third class, which is two classifications below the classification of 2(i) across the two years. This is below the allowable level of 1.5 modules at two classes below the classification under consideration. The student therefor meets the Secondary Rule for a degree classification. **Student Q would be awarded an Upper Second Class Degree 2(i).**

Student X has two modules at third class, which is two classifications below the classification of 2(i) across the two years, which is above the allowable number of 1.5 modules. Under the Secondary Rule there then needs to be a compensation exercise to see if there are a sufficient number of modules at or above the classification under consideration to balance out the number of third class modules.

Since students cannot have more than 1.5 modules at two classifications lower. Student X therefore has 1 module which needs to be compensated. The one third class module is excess of the limit can be compensated for by the one module at first class.

For Student X their module mark distribution changes as follows once the required compensation is carried out under the Secondary Rule:

Mark range	Classification	Student achieved in Year 2 (pre-final year)	Student achieved in Year 3	Original Total modules in class	Total after compensation
70-100	First Class (1)	0	1	1	0
60 to 69	Upper Second Class (2i)	1.5	1.5	3	4
50-59	Lower Second Class (2ii)	0.5	1.5	2	3
40-49	Third Class	2	0	2	1
0-39	Fail – No award	0	0	0	0

Now that the compensation is complete, the student's profile needs to be compared again against the Primary Rule. The students' profile has changed with the discounting of the First class module but they still have sufficient modules at or above the Upper Second Class (2i) classification to meet the requirements of the Primary rule. **Student X would be awarded an Upper Second Class Degree (2i).**

Note: SOAS is aware that the classification system is complex and that a simpler system would likely be preferable. It is expected that new detailed guidance on degree classifications will be issued to universities this summer (2017) and we are awaiting this guidance before considering, in consultation with students and staff, how we might improve our current system for degree classification.